

Congress passed the Communications Decency Act, which made it illegal to send indecent material to children via the Internet. But in June of 1997, the Supreme Court overturned portions of the law stating "indecent material is protected by the first amendment." Of course that ruling, that decision, set the tone for many other decisions.

In 1996, the Child Pornography Prevention Act outlawed child pornography. In April 2002 the Supreme Court declared the act unconstitutional. Again a precedent was set.

In October 1998, the Children Online Protection Act was signed into law to prohibit the communication of harmful material of children on publicly accessible Web sites. The Supreme Court's refusal to rule on the 1998 law prevent the law from being enacted.

There are many, many cases like this. What we see is sometimes under the guise of free speech, and certainly everyone in Congress believes in the principle of the first amendment. However, we find that some people's rights are being trampled because 80 to 90 percent of rapists and pedophiles use pornography on a regular basis, often before or sometimes during the commission of their crimes. Therefore, we think that it is time that we rethink some of these rulings.

Some people say pornography is harmless. However, what we read and see and think about certainly affects behavior. If this was not the case, I am sure that people would not spend billions of dollars on advertising because advertising does change behavior. There is no question to that effect.

The court has often ruled against school prayer, and I certainly would not advocate that a teacher or superintendent or principle or somebody in the school should be allowed to proselytize or say a prayer in class that would be offensive; but in 1962 the Supreme Court ruled the following prayer unconstitutional: "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence on thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers, and our country."

So it would appear that many court rulings regarding separation of church and State have ranged far afield from the intent of the framers of the Constitution. Benjamin Franklin said, "We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this. I also believe that without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in the political building no better than builders of Babel; we shall be divided by our little, partial local interests; our projects will be confounded; and we ourselves will become a reproach and a byword down to future ages."

He continues, "I therefore beg leave to move that, henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessing on our deliberation be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business." On Franklin's

insistence and urging, the House of Representatives and the Senate open every day with prayer.

I am not suggesting that the same thing needs to happen in our schools, but it does appear that the intent of the framers of the Constitution was maybe a little different than what we have seen played out in the courts.

George Washington said, "The propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a Nation that disregards the internal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained."

We have seen that the warnings of Franklin and Washington to some degree have come full circle. As we have moved further and further away from our spiritual underpinnings, we begin to see some of the fruits of that wandering. So despite the fact that the Constitution does not contain a separation of church and State clause, in 1992 the Supreme Court decision declared an invocation and a benediction at a graduation ceremony unconstitutional. The court held a minute of silence in a school was unconstitutional. So if you started the school day with a minute of silence in which students may pray silently, they may think about their history test, that minute of silence was held to be unconstitutional. That seems a little bit strange.

The court ruled a student-led prayer at a football game was unconstitutional. And of course many of us know the words "under God" was struck from the Pledge of Allegiance by the Ninth Circuit Court. The Supreme Court restored the phrase, but it threw the case out on a technicality. I am sure that challenge will resurface sometime soon.

So we have seen many examples of different rulings that have certainly affected our culture. A partial-birth abortion ban was recently struck down by the courts. And many in this body who favor abortion voted for this ban. More than 70 percent of the public now oppose partial-birth abortion. I am not going to go further into the abortion issue, but it seems rather strange that something that is disapproved of by so many people in the United States would be struck down.

The Constitution is increasingly interpreted as a living document. So the Constitution is often not interpreted as it was written, but rather as justices believe it should be or maybe how it should have been written. Legal decisions increasingly come down based not upon what the law states, but rather based upon the personal ideology of the jurist.

The Constitution is not based upon absolute principles, but rather the shifting sands of relativism. The philosophical bent of the Supreme Court Justices and district court justices determines the course of the Nation.

And so it will be interesting to see now that we have had some change on the court, and I do not mean to say that the court over a number of years has been totally errant, there are many

great decisions they have made, but I am saying that the general drift of the court has been one which has led us down a path that is certainly quite a distance from where we started out in the founding of our Nation.

So the makeup of the courts and the will of Congress will greatly influence whether we continue to drift further from our spiritual heritage or draw close to those values upon which our Nation was founded, the willingness of Congress to focus upon the pernicious influences impacting our children. And sometimes I am concerned because I see people who are here in Congress who fought the fight over the Internet battles and pornography and some of these things, and have simply started to back off because they realize that they have passed laws and they have passed court rulings they have not gotten anywhere and so they have almost quit trying. That is unfortunate.

And also the willingness of the American people to demand that those profiteering at the expense of our culture and our young people be reined in will largely shape the future of our Nation.

Terrorism is an ever-present threat. The economy is of great concern. However, terrorism and economic distress will not prevail as long as our national character is silent. So we are engaged in a cultural and a spiritual struggle of huge proportion, and I can only hope that the principles upon which this Nation was founded remain preeminent. As Congress addresses important issues such as national defense, the economy and health care, it is critical that we not lose sight of the fact that our Nation's survival is directly linked to the character of our people.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to address the House this evening.

□ 2220

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for half the time remaining before midnight, approximately 50 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor once again to address the House of Representatives, and we would like to thank the Democratic leadership for allowing us to have this time. Democratic leader NANCY PELOSI, Mr. STENY HOYER, and also our chair and vice chair of our caucus.

I think it is important for us to come to the floor once again in this 30-something Working Group to talk about the issues that are facing America and how the Republican majority is falling short of its responsibility. Mr. Speaker, to fulfill not only the hopes, but aspirations of Americans as we come to Washington, D.C. to represent them in a way that we should, need it be education, health care, what have you.

We have so much to share, Mr. Speaker, tonight, 50 minutes will not even give us justice for what we have to share. I must say that the 30-something Working Group is very, very, very excited and enthusiastic for being here tonight to hopefully drive home the point even better than we have done before of why it is important that we need a new Congress here in Washington, D.C. that is going to represent the American people.

And we are not just talking about Democrats. We are not just talking about Independents. We are not just talking about Republicans. We are talking about the American people. We want to move in a comprehensive way, making sure that we can have true bipartisanship in this chamber. I think we have expressed that in the past. I think that we have shown that in the past when we were in the majority, and it is nothing like third-party validators that we have here tonight, Mr. Speaker, that even drives home the point even better.

We have talked in the past about issues that are facing the American people and this Congress. We talked about the K Street Project back when no one really wanted to talk about the K Street Project, which is a project to encourage lobbyists here in Washington, D.C. to contribute to one side, to the Republican Party to help not only gain the majority, but to also be a part of supporting Republican candidates, to have access to this House. We talked about that. We got some dirty looks from some Members of the majority side about exposing that.

And then later, after Abramoff pleading guilty without a trial, without a jury selection or anything, the Republican majority said we will no longer carry out that project because it was wrong. It was the 30-something Working Group that moved boldly in that direction to expose that practice here in Washington, D.C.

Even when it comes down to our troops as it relates to equipment and supplies that they needed, even though you have some folks on the majority side that said we did it in a way that the American people should be proud of, it was on this side of the aisle that we did so.

So it is not all about who made it to the front of the classroom first, Mr. Speaker. It is about those of us that understand the responsibility of governance, those of us that understand the responsibility of leadership and those of us that cherish the opportunity to be here as part of this elected House of Representatives.

Like I said, Mr. Speaker, it is so much to share tonight, there is not enough time to share it. But I would like to yield to some of my colleagues at this time so that we can start the kind of discourse that is going to head us in the right direction here in Washington, and hopefully the American people will start looking through some of the 30-second ads, looking through

some of the targeted media campaigns that are out there. When I say marketing campaigns, Mr. DELAHUNT, and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, that sometimes mislead the American people and having them believe one thing when the reality is so evident.

Like I said before in the past, this is an unprecedented time, Mr. Speaker, of the fiscal situation here in this country, unprecedented as it relates to unusual things happening here in this House and in this Congress that are unexplainable. But every day, we need to be picking up the Washington Post or local papers. We are finding that the reason why strange things are taking place here in this country is the fact that strange things are taking place here in this House and in the Senate and in the White House. And I think that it is important that we bring this not only to the attention of the American people, but we call the American people to action on behalf of their country, not on behalf of party, not on behalf of age or gender, but on behalf of holding our country together.

With that I would like to yield to Congresswoman DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. And I would just like to say congratulations to your Florida Gators.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you very much. We were thrilled and I had an opportunity to attend the game last night and it was an incredible experience, and congratulations to the Florida Gators.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Can I interrupt here? It's tough to tell that she is a Gators fan tonight, isn't it?

Mr. DELAHUNT. What are the colors of the Gators, could you tell us? Do they happen to be blue and orange?

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Orange and blue. And each and every Gator fan that I know, Mr. DELAHUNT, bleeds orange and blue.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Well, congratulations once more.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you so much. But, all lightheartedness aside, I am struck, in following what the gentleman from Florida touched on, I am struck by a collection of facts that really are staring us in the face that are the direct result of Republican policies; today, this moment, not 5 years ago, not 4 years from now, but the direct result of Republican leadership or, I should say, lack of Republican leadership, because they are obviously in charge.

Let me just go through with you some of the things that we have pulled together and that are the economic facts facing this country and that clearly show why, when I go home and talk to my constituents and have done so recently, I did kind of a run through my district and spoke to many different kinds of organizations, many different kinds of groups, Mr. DELAHUNT, and I am sure that you are hearing the same kinds of things that I am.

Americans' confidence in their government has been so badly shaken. And

it is not just that the culture of corruption and cronyism and incompetence that hangs over this building is there by itself. It is that, as a result of that corruption and cronyism, the policy that results from the corruption that is so deeply disturbing.

Let me just go through with you some of the things that we have been able to pull together just related to the economy. This is as of March 2006, just last month. 7.2 million Americans remained unemployed. We have an additional 4.2 million who want a job but are not counted among the unemployed.

Since this President took office, the economy has posted only 15 months of job gains of 150,000 or more. That is the number of jobs that is just needed to keep up with population growth. So all this talk about an explosion in job growth and how we are really on the rise in terms of job growth is just baloney.

Mr. DELAHUNT. If my colleague would yield. I don't want to skip past that, because I think it is important to analyze what kind of jobs are being created. And I think we all concur that the number of jobs are insufficient to move American society ahead to realize the American dream, if you will. But the reality is it is not the kind of jobs that carry with them the ability to have a living standard that most Americans enjoyed 5 years ago, 10 years ago and 15 years ago. These aren't good jobs at good wages. These are menial jobs, in many cases, at low wages. There is a difference.

The truth is that the median income for an American family has declined. It hasn't grown. So that while there may be jobs out there, Americans are falling behind. They are losing their health care. They are losing their pension. And what is really tragic is that they are losing the hope that all Americans have for their children and grandchildren. That is what I am experiencing.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DELAHUNT. I yield.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. You know, before I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida, you can't convince me that we can't do something about this. I can't be convinced of this. Proper investment. We can go back, GI Bill, space race, you know, we, as a country, transcontinental railroad, we had a program, we had a plan that we would invest back into the United States of America. And now we know it is not the transcontinental railroad. Now we know it is not the space program, at least to the extent it was.

But what is it now? Is it business incubators? Is it math and science graduates? Let's figure this out. Is it high speed rail?

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I know what it is not.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. What isn't it?

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. It is not just words in the State of the

Union, because it was very nice to hear the President talk about how he wants to make sure that we can have this.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We have got to get past the rhetoric. Let's get past the words. Words, words, words, no substance.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. What I hear from most people today is it is very nice, you can give a whole lot, it is nice to hear the speeches. They want the action to back up the words.

□ 2230

And let us just go a little bit deeper into this whole issue of job growth. So go beyond the 7.2 million Americans that remain unemployed. Since the President took office, only 15 months of job growth, just keeping up with population growth. The Bush administration has the slowest job growth of any administration in over 70 years. Since January of 2001, 2.9 million manufacturing jobs have been lost. There are now more than 1.3 million more unemployed private sector workers than in January of 2001.

And who has been in charge this whole time, Mr. MEEK? Have Democrats been in charge during these years that talk about the lackluster job performance?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. No, ma'am.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Who has been in charge?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The Republican majority.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Oh, the Republicans. Okay. That is what I thought. Congressional Republicans.

They talk about how they want to grow jobs, that making sure people can go to work and earn a decent living is what is important. Then why is it that congressional Republicans defeated a Democratic amendment to increase the minimum wage, which has not been increased since 1997, the longest period of time we have gone without increasing the minimum wage? From \$5.15, which is what it is now, we proposed to increase it to \$7.25.

Mr. DELAHUNT. They prefer jobs at low wages. In essence, it is really that simple. Low-wage jobs are being produced by the policies of this administration and this Congress that is complicit. Complicit. And we know there has not been a single veto by this President because this is a Congress that goes along with this administration.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. This is Bush's Congress. This is President Bush's Congress.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. The bottom line is this: We have a bobble head majority. We have a rubber stamp majority that is willing to do anything and everything the President has asked.

Now, Mr. DELAHUNT, we talked about this last week, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. RYAN, about the fact that like 90 percent of the American people understand what is going on here under the Capitol dome, and then the majority runs from the back of the class and

runs up and says, We want to govern. We are going to stop the President from doing X, Y, and Z. Why does it take that, Mr. DELAHUNT?

I mean the bottom line is it is about leadership, not how Republicans feel or how Democrats feel or how independents feel. It should be everyday business here in Washington, D.C. But they are so busy trying to cater to the President of the United States or trying to cater to the special interests, we forget about that individual who showed up on a Tuesday on election day in a given community early for representation. Not us on this side, but the majority does. And I think it is important that we share with the other Members that are watching us in their offices or whatever the case may be that they need to get back to the days of the morning when they woke up the next day, when they were newly elected as a Member of Congress, how they felt about representation, how they felt about being a part of the United States Congress, how they felt about representing their local community. And I think that kind of gets lost between the wine and cheese receptions that take place, Mr. Speaker, here in Washington, D.C. I am a Member of Congress. I am offended sometimes when I see Members taking votes against the will of their own constituency.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I am offended that they are not offended. That offends me that they are not offended.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I am dying to make this comparison.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Do not die just yet because you have to share some information.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I know. We have 6 more months, and I am not through my list yet.

The minimum wage being \$5.15 and the Members that you are talking about that were so fresh faced and exuberant the morning after the election and they were going to come to Washington and do the right thing and not be the rubber stamp Republicans, all of them voted against increasing that minimum wage. And if the minimum wage had kept pace with inflation, today it would be \$8.88.

I am certain that none of our Republican colleagues have done this recently because, otherwise, they would have voted for the amendment, but have you driven through a McDonald's recently and ordered a number one, which is a Big Mac meal?

Mr. DELAHUNT. I am on a diet myself.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I am kind of a McDonald's fanatic. And since it is quick and easy and when you have got your kids in the back of the minivan, believe me, the quickest thing sometimes is to go through the drive-through. The number one is just about \$5.15 at this point. By the time you get the meal and whatever else you need, to make sure that you have got your soda and your drink and your

fries, can you imagine that the minimum wage just barely pays for one Big Mac meal? I mean are the American people not worth more than a Big Mac meal? That is really what it boils down to.

I think they are. I want to make sure that my constituents can afford to feed more than just themselves or more than just one kid. Which kid are they going to pick? Which kid do they pick? Okay, who wants to eat today?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That is about \$16,000 a year even if it was adjusted accordingly; right? Eight bucks is about \$16,000 a year.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Yes. I mean who can live on that?

In our community, Mr. MEEK, look at what housing costs.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, we are with you 110 percent because this is information that needs to be shared and third-party validators can validate this.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. We are talking about the reality.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. This is the reality of the situation. This is not fiction; it is fact.

But if you can, I want you to get through that list because I know that Mr. DELAHUNT and Mr. RYAN are so fired up right now as it relates to sharing this information.

Mr. Speaker, this is almost not fair. I mean this is just so unfair that we have this much information to share with the Members about what they have done and what they have not done and how we are so ready to get in the game, to lead this House in the direction that every American can appreciate. Every American does not work at McDonald's, but guess what. There are a lot of Americans there and family members of Americans that punch in and punch out every day and know what it means to make the minimum wage.

Mr. DELAHUNT. My friend, before we let DEBBIE go through that litany, and it is a long litany, let us also understand it is not just those of us here that recognize that. It is not just Democrats. It is Republicans.

I will tell you I find it particularly ironic that the leader of the Gingrich revolution that brought a Republican majority to this House in 1994 recognizes what has happened to the majority in this particular body.

This is what Newt Gingrich had to say about them: "They are seen by the country as being in charge of a government that cannot function."

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Will the gentleman suspend.

Mr. RYAN, would you take that chart over to Mr. DELAHUNT. You all are going to share in this information sharing because Mr. DELAHUNT actually served when Mr. Gingrich was around and I think it is important that we share that factual information with the Members.

And, Mr. DELAHUNT, if you would share that because I know we have a

plethora of information to share to-night.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Again, let me repeat it. This is a quote of Mr. Gingrich that appeared in the Knight Ridder newspaper this past Friday. And this is his observation about what is occurring in this body over which he presided: "They are seen by the country as being in charge of a government that cannot function." That cannot function.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. "They."

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. DELAHUNT, I notice Mr. RYAN and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and we are so glad to be joined by Ms. JACKSON-LEE, who is one of my heroes in this process. "They."

□ 2040

Mr. Speaker, this is the man who gave the Republican majority birth. "Them." "They." He is saying he is no longer a part of what is going on here. "They." Not "my colleagues," not "my Republican brethren and sisters." It is "they."

This goes far beyond the 30-something working group. This goes far beyond Democrats and Republicans. Here is a man who was at the front of the line saying charge, that is now calling the Republican majority "they."

Mr. DELAHUNT. It is us versus them, and he ain't part of "them" anymore.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Who is with them?

Mr. DELAHUNT. As he said in this particular interview, if I can compose for a moment, here is an additional quote by the former Speaker of the Republican Congress. The reporter writes that he cited a series of blunders under Republican rule, from failures in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina to mismanagement of the war in Iraq. He said the government has squandered billions of dollars in Iraq, Mr. MEEK.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Who is the third party validator in the facts that you are citing now?

Mr. DELAHUNT. That is Newt Gingrich, who I know because when I first came to Congress, he was the presiding officer of this branch.

My colleague, SHEILA JACKSON-LEE, who preceded me in terms of service here in this branch, would also know and clearly could articulate that Newt Gingrich is someone who, whether you agreed with him or not, said it like he saw it. And this is what he sees today: A Republican Party in disarray, a Republican Party that can't govern. That is the bottom line.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. If the Members could indulge me as well just for a moment, because by my good friend Mr. DELAHUNT calling up those memories, Mr. DELAHUNT, you remember in essence Newt Gingrich rode in on a revolution, a revolution of change, a revolution of a government that would be smaller and allegedly more efficient.

His first act was, of course, many of us claim it to be a Contract on America, but he called it at that time a Con-

tract with America. A balanced budget was allegedly his goal, along with a number of other issues.

Certainly, this whole question of a misdirected war or an undeclared war I don't think would have been the kind of effective and efficient government, and, of course, I am not in any way characterizing the work of our soldiers, but that he would have argued. I wanted to raise this point so you can get to that bottom line, Mr. DELAHUNT, which, if I read it correctly, talks about the mismanagement of the Iraq war.

Many people will condemn the words that we have offered about the Iraq war, saying there is a question of patriotism. But this former Speaker says mismanagement of the war in Iraq, and that the government has squandered billions of dollars in Iraq.

Let me just cite this point from the International Relations Committee. The Special Inspector General for Iraq has cast grave doubts on the results and effectiveness of the United States reconstruction plan, including the failure to complete three-quarters of oil and gas reconstruction projects, half of all the electricity projects and about 40 percent of water and sanitation projects financed by the U.S. So Mr. Gingrich is, like you said, Mr. DELAHUNT, telling it is like it is.

I simply leave you with this question: If we are in the business of governance, balancing the budget, why do Democrats have to beg for hearings so that the American people can find out the truth? Not to question the valid, courageous efforts of our soldiers, but why we have money that is wasted, so soldiers, for example, have no equipment? This is what Democrats are trying to do, clear up the mess.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Do you know why? Because this is a rubber stamp Republican Congress. We had an amazing thing happen today, and my good friend from Florida, Mr. MEEK, he has a much bigger rubber stamp that we use to show what is going on in this place.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You can hold it.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I feel privileged to hold it, although I don't want to hold it too long, lest it rub off.

But we got today more than 100 of these "Rubber Stamp Republican Congress" stamps from bloggers and people in the communities all over the country who are fed up and frustrated and who want us to continue to talk about what is going on here. Because it appears as though, and I mean this respectfully, that when people on the other side of the aisle come in this room, that they are checking, and I don't know whether they are checking their brains at the door or their opinions at the door or their convictions at the door, but we have watched, all of us, the board light up here with yesses and noes, and I know I have had conversations with Republican Members on the other side who say, "I know I

am going in there and I am voting this way." Then you watch it, the board, the light next to their name goes from red to green or green to red, and you watch their arm being wrenched behind their back, and out comes the rubber stamp.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We have seen tears shed on this floor.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Out comes the rubber stamps. We need to throw away the rubber stamps. It is time to be done with the rubber stamps.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I think the whole thing is that is missing here, I think time and time again, there is one little general theme, and I think the former Speaker sums it all up for us in that same article. He noted that a Congressional watchdog agency recently smuggled a truck carrying nuclear material, and we talked about this last week a few nights, into the country, smuggled a truck carrying nuclear material into the country to test security. This is a direct quote from the former Speaker.

"Why isn't the President pounding the table? Why isn't he sending up 16 reform bills?" Now, nuclear materials snuck into the country, and there is no one really even talking about it in the Republican House, the Republican Senate or the White House right now.

All we are saying is, and we come here every night, sometimes two or three times a week, to basically say there is no leadership in Washington D.C., Mr. Speaker.

The Democrats in this House want to step up and take the lead, because, quite frankly, not only us, you couldn't do any worse than this outfit does. We have plans for security, comprehensive plans. We have plans for innovation, plans for job creation, plans for health care. We have an agenda ready to implement for this country, including balancing the budget. But, time and time again, everything is rubber stamped. The bobbiehead Congress. "Yes, Mr. President. Yes, Mr. President. Yes, Mr. President." At some point you have to stop and say, hey, wait a minute. The country is going in the wrong direction.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. What we have been asking, what Democrats have been asking, is where is the outrage? What is their limit? Where do they reach the breaking point, individual Republican Members? When do they say "that is it? There is a point at which I cannot support the direction that my leadership is taking this country anymore," meaning theirs. When do they say, "I have got to stand up and do the right thing?"

It appears that their tolerance level for being pushed to do exactly as they are instructed is unbelievably high, far higher than my constituents, and I know your constituents, are comfortable with. We have got to make sure that we start moving the country back in the right direction and change some of these facts on the ground here.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I think what we need to do here the last 15 minutes or

so that we have, I think we need to tell the Speaker of the House and the other Members what we are going to do when we get in.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I think that is a good point. May I just give some history for a moment, because you set the tone or you set sort of the parameters for an indictable offense.

When the Clinton administration was ending its tenure, as many of you are aware, it was one of the most maligned and accused 8 years by this majority-controlled House, even though there was a high degree of success. But I think the most striking success was the Balanced Budget Amendment in 1997, which generated an enormous amount of surplus, putting us in the black, which created the Children's Health Insurance Program that went all over America, except for the State of Texas, which returned back money because with our Republican leadership we couldn't find children to insure.

□ 2250

But we had at that time billions of dollars of surplus. Now we have this gift given to the American people: Republicans increased the debt limit by \$3 trillion. And we get to \$3 trillion. And if you want to calculate what that means for each child, each grandchild, each mother and father, each grandparent, you can see the enormity of this amount. So it is crucial for Democrats to come and to make and select and to emphasize priorities.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Will the gentleman yield?

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I would be happy to yield.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Because time and time again, how many debates have we had on the floor over the past several years? No one on the majority side, Mr. Speaker, has been able to explain to this House or the American people how this is somehow good. Somebody explain to the Speaker of the House and somebody explain to the Congress how increasing the debt limit by \$3 trillion is good. Is it good for the economy? Is it good for the next generation? Who is benefiting from this? Nobody, except foreign countries. This is bad. This is bad for the American economy, this is bad for job creation, this ends up raising the burden for the next generation. This is terrible. Since the President has been in, June of 2002 raised the debt limit \$450 billion. May of 2003, \$984 billion. November of 2004, \$800 billion. And get that poster ready, Mr. MEEK. March of 2006, \$781 billion. \$3 trillion debt limit increase.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Really quick, because we are going to rapid fire here because we only have a few minutes left. I just want to quickly again, you have seen this, this will be in the National Archives one day because we talk about this time and time again. Let me, Mr. Speaker, move this education plan that Democrats have and this prescription drug plan so the Members can see this chart here. I think it

is important. This \$1.05 trillion that the President has accumulated with the Republican Congress in just 4 years versus the 42 presidents before this president and this Congress was only able to accumulate \$1.01 trillion, and that is World War I, World War II, the Great Depression, you name it. You talk about the Democratic plan, Mr. DELAHUNT, Ms. JACKSON-LEE, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and Mr. RYAN, the bottom line is that we have countries that are owning America right now, not because Americans went out and made bad decisions; because this administration has made bad decisions, and this Congress, the rubber stamp Congress has allowed it to happen and has been doing this all along. All they have to do is be invited to a breakfast at the White House and it is like, "Yes, sir, Mr. President. We will do exactly what we have to do. Not only will we do it, we will defend your wrong actions."

Mr. DELAHUNT. You are saying we have an ownership society, Mr. MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. So, in closing, you want to know the Democratic plan? The Democratic plan is paying as we go. Paying as we go. Because when you are in debt, you do not continue to use a credit card. So if Americans want to do away with the \$882.8 billion that Japan owns, we will pull this off the chart. China, if you want to do away with the \$249.8 billion that China owns right now of our debt, and pay as we go, and we have evidence and third-party validators that will be explained to the American people and the Members, have a Democratic Congress. The U.K., you want to get rid of the \$223.2 billion in foreign debt that they own of our country? I am destroying this chart here. But get a Democratic Congress, because we have shown, we balanced the budget, and we are committed to doing this because we believe in the way we believe when we were elected that we are here to represent the people. Caribbean nations, many of our folks are going and traveling to the Caribbean and saying, oh, how great America is. Well, when you land there, they are owning a piece of the American pie, so you need to respect them. We will be able to do away with that \$115.3 billion that we owe them. Taiwan, \$71.3 billion they own of our debt, thanks to the Republican Congress and to the President of the United States. Also, Canada, \$53.8 billion. Korea, \$66.5 billion. Germany, \$65.7 billion. OPEC nations and, you know, Mr. DELAHUNT, I know that is your specialty, I do not really want to talk about that, but those are nations that we are very concerned about at this time that they own \$67.8 billion.

So if you want to get the reverse factor of what the Republicans have done in putting us in unprecedented debt, no other time, Mr. Speaker, in the history of the republic, no other time. You cannot say, well, the Democratic Congress was once at this level. That was not ever the case. In 4 years, this has happened, the mismanagement.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. What we have been trying to do over the past so many years consistently and constantly, amendment after amendment after amendment, the Democratic Party has offered and we have it all here, you will be able to go to our Web site and see these charts: In 2006 budget resolution, we offered to put pay as you go, that you are not going to spend any money unless you get it somewhere else or cut it out of a program and pay for it. Democrat, Mr. SPRATT, offered that amendment. Zero Republicans voted for that. Rollcall vote number 87 March 17, 2005. 30-Something's aren't making this up.

Mr. DELAHUNT. But they raised the debt limit. Didn't they?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. They found the votes to raise the debt limit. Mr. SPRATT again offered the 2005 budget resolution, H. Con. Res. 393, rollcall vote number 91, March 25, 2004, right here in black and white. Republicans, how many voted to put spending under control, reign in this Republican Congress? Zero.

Mr. DELAHUNT. It is a lot easier to raise that debt limit, Mr. RYAN.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We are tired of the rhetoric, Uncle Bill.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. RYAN, how many Americans, do you think, think it is okay to just put all their debt on their credit card and never mind how much money they have coming in?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. You cannot do it at home, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. But I guess the Republican leadership think here it is fine.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. They are taking advantage of their power, and it is hurting the country. June 17 of 2003, Mr. OBEY tried to increase port security, which is another huge issue we have been trying to do here. \$500 million. And we will go through all this. All these charts will be on our Web site, Mr. Speaker, for other Members to access and find out. We have tried consistently to increase funding for port security, and we will pay for it. We have tried to rein in spending. Republican Congress will not let us.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. If I may add to your question, if you would. I do not think most Americans know that 70 percent of the Nation's ports are owned by foreign operators. Of course, to hear this administration tell the story, they tell you of course that does not interfere with security, the Coast Guard handles it. What they do not tell you is the Coast Guard makes checks on compliance; they do not handle the security operation of our ports. So this is an important issue that was rejected by the Republican Congress time after time, every time we try to rebuild America, put America on the right track, eliminate a \$3 trillion debt limit, Republicans turn the clock back. I think the Democrats have a better story to tell for the American people.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. No question about it. I want to follow up

on something that the gentlewoman from Texas focused on, because a lot of people in America, even I have a hard time getting my mind around what a billion and a trillion is. It is hard to think about it in everyday terms. So we had it boiled down in very convenient chart form to help illustrate what a billion is.

For example, a billion hours ago, humans were making their first tools in the Stone Age. A billion minutes ago, it was 104 AD, and the Chinese first invented paper. A billion seconds ago, it was 1975, and the last American troops had just pulled out of Vietnam. All of those things, a very long time ago. A billion is a big, big number, clearly, measured in terms of time.

But a billion dollars ago, under this administration and this Republican Congressional leadership, was only 3 hours and 32 minutes ago at the rate that our government currently spends money. That is astonishing. That is what it means when you think about what a billion means under this Republican leadership.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We need the American people to give us a chance to lead this country. We want it. Put us in, Coach. We will put the PAYGO back into effect. We will rein in the spending that the Republican Congress that they think they can cut taxes, borrow money, and spend at levels unprecedented. And I am sure many of you saw the USA Today yesterday. I am sure you made it past the sports section with the recap of the games and everything. The Federal Government spending is outstripping economic growth at a rate unseen in more than half a century. The Federal Government, quote, is currently spending 20.8 cents of every dollar the economy generates, up from 18.5 cents as one White House budget document shows. It is not our documents, it is White House documents. That is the most rapid growth during one administration since Franklin Roosevelt.

□ 2300

Now, what happened to this outfit that came in in 1994 that said they wanted a balanced budget amendment, they wanted to make government smaller, spending it like drunken sailors, get this government under control, make it nimble and efficient and address the needs?

With all the technology and ability to communicate in the 21st century, we cannot even respond to a storm we know 5 days in advance is coming. It is ridiculous, and this country deserves better. We should not expect this comedy of errors that we get from FEMA and Halliburton and everybody in Iraq. It is a comedy of errors, and we need to get things straightened up here.

Mr. DELAHUNT. But it is a tragic comedy because the lives of young men and women in Iraq are constantly at risk. We all know what we have lost in terms of our youth, and we all know what the cost has been in terms of the taxpayers' dollars.

What I find extraordinary is, and SHEILA JACKSON-LEE alluded to it earlier, every Democrat on the International Relations Committee recently, in fact yesterday, signed a letter requesting an oversight hearing in terms of what is going on in Iraq, why the rampant fraud, abuse and corruption. We have been requesting that for 2 years, and you know what, we have never received an answer, not a single hearing.

If I were a Republican Member of this House, Mr. Speaker, and I read the op-ed piece by Retired Army Major General Paul Eaton, who was responsible for the training of Iraqi security forces, and received hardly anything in terms of support from the civilian leadership of this Defense Department, if I read what he said, I would insist that we listen to this individual, someone who served his country well, and you know what, they just want to ignore it. But I have to read what General Paul Eaton had to say because I think it is remarkable.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is not competent to lead our Armed Forces. In sum, he has shown himself incompetent strategically, operationally and tactically, and is far more than anyone else responsible for what has happened to our important mission in Iraq. Mr. Rumsfeld must step down.

That is from an individual who has served this country in Iraq with valor and distinction and his recommendation to this Congress is this: "Congress must assert itself. Too much power has shifted to the executive branch, not just in terms of waging war but also in planning the military of the future. Congress should remember it still has the power of the purse; it should call our generals, colonels, captains and sergeants to testify frequently, so that their opinions and needs are known to the men they lead."

"Our most important, and sometimes most severe, judges are our subordinates. That is a fact I discovered early on in my military career. It is, unfortunately, a lesson Donald Rumsfeld seems incapable of learning."

What a damning indictment, and yet not a sound from the majority in Congress. If I had read that, I would have asked him to come and testify before the committee of jurisdiction the next day.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Gingrich is saying send up reform, lead, do something; this government cannot function. This is not just us. This is Mr. Gingrich saying the same thing.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. It says shame on them, shame on them that they would tolerate this kind of abuse.

Let me just quickly say, Democrats have been saying this over and over again. Democrats have been asking in the most polite way for Mr. Rumsfeld to step aside, to resign. TOM LANTOS says that Americans will not tolerate this waste of tax dollars, but let me give an anecdotal story.

What is happening in Iraq and other places, where Americans go and make commitments, we are going to build schools, we are going to reconstruct, we give these contracts to no-bid competitor, huge contracts. They sit in their offices. They give it to another contractor, another contractor, another contractor, who takes a piece of the pie. By the time you get down to the reconstruct in Mosul or Baghdad, nothing happens. What do the Iraqi people say? Americans have made a promise. What do the taxpayers say? You want to pay all this money for foreign aid and defense and you give us nothing. Then we get bad diplomacy because our allies or who we are trying to help looks and says we are masquerading.

Let me just finish by saying I have spoken to contractors and to the independent contractors who say they are living large in Iraq, while sadly our soldiers are looking for water, are looking for body armor, and some of the contractors are living large.

Let me say this, there are many who are over there sacrificing in danger. I am not condemning the workers who are on the front lines, who are civilians, who are in those places where our soldiers are. We thank them. But some of those who they work for are layering the contracts, and therefore, by layering the contracts, American people are expending dollars, and no one is turning on the light like the International Relations Committee has asked for, to have oversight to answer the question of what is going on. I believe we owe the American people more than this.

Shame on this House, shame on this leadership.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Amen.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That is the job. That is the job. That is the responsibility that we have here of oversight.

Mr. DELAHUNT. There is no oversight.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And it is because the President does not want any oversight, and the Republican Congress says, yes, Mr. President.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. There is no oversight. There is no outrage. There is no conscience. There is no heart. There is no ability of the leadership on the other side to recognize that the country has to move in a new direction and that we have to do something to restore the American people's confidence in their government. When will that happen?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. As we wrap up, I would suggest that over the course of the next few months, Mr. Speaker, the American people will not get an answer from the leadership on the Republican side about what why the debt limit was increased by \$3 trillion, why we are borrowing billions upon billions upon billions and even trillions of dollars from foreign countries, selling off. You will not hear a good answer, reining in spending, the most rapid spending growth during one administration

since Franklin Roosevelt. This is the outfit that wanted to have a revolution.

Mr. Speaker, www.housedemocrats.gov/30something for those Members. All the charts that were up tonight are on the Web site, www.housedemocrats.gov/30something.

Enjoyed it. Go Gators.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, with that, we would not only like to say thanks to Mr. DELAHUNT but Ms. JACKSON-LEE who joined us tonight from the great State of Texas, also Mr. RYAN and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ for being here tonight.

We would also in the 30 Something Working Group recognize the great contribution of Dr. Martin Luther King who was assassinated on this date and Mr. Ron Brown who was our Secretary of Commerce that went down in a plane crash yesterday, the day before, on Monday. We want to let both families know we appreciate the contributions of these two great Americans to our country. We will be forever better because of their contributions.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, the evidence that was just overwhelming tonight from the Members of not only what we are saying, because we are concerned as Americans, not just as Democrats, we are saying that we are willing to lead. We are also saying, Mr. Speaker, that when you have the past Speaker of this House, the first Republican Speaker in 40-something years coming before this body and make the statements that he believes the majority will lose the majority this time around because of what he identified this time of the evidence of why it will happen is just powerful and hard to defend on the majority side.

□ 2310

We are not asking for the majority side to defend what the past Speaker has said, but I think it is important to take note and that the American people take note of what is happening right now. So I think the American spirit will rise up over partisan politics and allow us to lead.

With that, I want to thank our vice chair, Mr. LARSON, of the Democratic Caucus; Mr. CLYBURN, our chairman; STENY HOYER, our Democratic whip; and Ms. PELOSI, who is the Democratic leader, for allowing us to have this time. We look forward to coming back to the floor to address not only the Members but the American people.

CUT UNNECESSARY TAB ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized until midnight.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the privilege of being recognized to address this House this evening, and I would start out with some responses and some answers to

these questions that you have been advised you will never hear the answers to. I didn't come prepared to answer these questions, but I actually think I am prepared to answer them.

The remarks with regard to the need to balance the budget. I agree, and I have a plan to balance this budget. I don't want to balance it by raising taxes. I want to balance this budget by controlling our spending. That is the issue. That is what the American people want. That is what I want. That is what we would do if we were a family balancing our budget or a small business balancing our budget or a large business balancing our budget. We would take a look at our spending.

Of course, we would work on the revenue side. Our revenue side has been growing. It grew 14.5 percent more than anticipated last year because we kept the taxes down. So I would suggest my colleagues on the other side of the aisle join with me. I will be introducing a piece of legislation. It is called the CUT legislation, which means cut unnecessary tab. Cut the unnecessary tab of this Federal Government.

It is going to be a new process that has never been offered to this Congress before, Mr. Speaker. It is a process that will allow for a privileged motion to come to the floor under an open rule that would be a rescissions bill once every quarter. Once every quarter, leadership will have the first 10 days of each quarter to offer a rescissions bill. If they do not do that, any Member can offer a rescissions bill under a privileged motion. And if the Speaker recognizes them, they can bring forward a shell bill or a bill that has a thousand cuts in it, for that matter, but it will allow every single line item that has been appropriated by this Congress to be brought back before this Congress and removed from the budget under rescissions.

When an appropriation bills leaves the House and goes to the Senate, and the Senate works their will on the appropriation bill and it comes back to conference and we agree and do final passage on an appropriation bill, it then goes to the President for his signature. From the instant that that bill is enacted, and generally from the instant that the President's signature and ink goes on that bill, it will be subject then to rescissions that will happen four times a year in this Congress.

Four times a year Congress will take up a rescissions bill, and it will allow any Member to bring an amendment that will be ruled in order, provided it is in the proper sequence in the structure of the rescissions bill, which will allow actually for rescissions of all appropriations that have gone out that haven't been expended. So every Member then will have that opportunity to have their attempt at a line item veto. And when that budget is done and when the expenditures are spent, then a majority of this Congress will have had their say on every single line item.

If they object to a particular issue, like say, for example the Cowgirls Hall

of Fame would be one that comes to mind, they would simply bring an amendment that would be added to the rescissions bill, put it up, debate the amendment, and we would vote that amendment up or down. If the amendment succeeds and it is to strike the funding for the Cowgirls Hall of Fame, then that would become part of the rescissions bill that would come off this floor, presumably pass and go over to the Senate for them to act on it. Now, whether they do or not is an open question as well, Mr. Speaker. But certainly the public would put some pressure on the Senate to do the right thing and do the responsible thing.

That is one way to control earmarks. It would allow Congress to address every single earmark and rescind, if they chose, those earmarks that are not appropriate spending. So the pork and the fat that is in the bill, particularly the appropriations that come in in conference that don't have a vote on the House or the Senate, unless they are part of the overall conference report, those kinds of appropriations then could be singled out in our rescissions bill and we could strike the unnecessary spending.

It would be something that would empower the rank-and-file members of this Congress and help them offset some of the powerful tactics of the appropriations people when they sit down in conference and put these appropriations in the bill. It is appropriate. It is something I believe our Founding Fathers would agree with. It is something that will control, to some degree, the overspending of our budget.

Now, one can argue that it is entitlements that are the big part of this, and I will agree. Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and interest, those four items, are swallowing up more than half of our budget. Our discretionary portion of the budget is getting smaller and smaller. But we can still address the overspending in our discretionary budget. And this doesn't mean we can't address our entitlements. I am for going down that path of addressing the entitlements too, Mr. Speaker.

Now, my CUT bill will be introduced sometime in the next 2 weeks, and that means Cut the Unnecessary Tab of Congress. It is new. I think it is unique. I do not think anything has ever been offered like this in Congress before. I don't want to go so far as to say that it is revolutionary, but I will go so far as to say that I believe it is necessary. It is necessary for us to shine some sunshine on the things we do here in this Congress and let the people see how we do business, and put people up in this Congress for a vote so we can read their voting record and determine where they really stand.

So these kind of nights when you hear this rhetoric go on over and over and over again, that we are spending too much money and we are irresponsible and the national debt is going up and up and up and up, I would say to the people that have been making